



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

# DON'T BE AFRAID OF CLINICAL TRIALS: THEY COULD IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF YOUR CARE

Progress in cancer treatment results from researching new procedures and drugs through clinical trials. If you are thinking about participating in a clinical trial, you may feel nervous or unsure. This is normal. But the more you know about what's involved and what to expect, the more comfortable you'll be about your decision. This fact sheet answers some common questions about clinical trials.

## WHAT IS A CLINICAL TRIAL?

**A clinical trial is a research study that evaluates a new treatment.**

In most cases, the new treatment has already shown promise of being an improvement over the standard treatment. Many clinical trials are tests to see how much better a new treatment works than the current one. People in clinical trials are among the first to receive new treatments. They are also closely monitored by doctors and other researchers.



## HOW DO I FIND A CLINICAL TRIAL?

**Ask your oncologist.** He or she is most familiar with your case and can tell you if there are clinical trials for someone with your type and stage of cancer. You can also find listings of clinical trials through resources such as:

- **National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service**  
1-800-4-CANCER  
[www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials](http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials)
- **American Cancer Society's Clinical Trials Matching Service**  
1-800-303-5691  
[www.cancer.org/clinicaltrial](http://www.cancer.org/clinicaltrial)

## HOW DO I KNOW IF A CLINICAL TRIAL IS RIGHT FOR ME?

**Learn as much as you can.**

Before you sign up for a clinical trial, make sure you understand exactly what treatment is being offered and how it differs from the standard treatment available for your cancer. Ask about new or possibly unique side effects of the treatment that is being studied. This information will help you make an informed decision.

**Understand what your insurance covers and doesn't cover.** Many medical insurance companies do not include coverage for doctors, treatments or other expenses related

to clinical trials. While the clinic or hospital running the trial will cover the cost of any drugs under study, you might need to advocate for reimbursement from your insurer for coverage for the other costs associated with the trial. Here are a few questions you may want to ask your health care team:

- What will I need to pay for myself?
- Will I be reimbursed for any expenses such as transportation?
- Who will pay for the treatment? Will the trial, or my insurance, cover all or part of it?

### **Learn about your rights and protections.**

People who take part in clinical trials have rights and protections to make sure their privacy and well-being are maintained. For example, all study participants must sign an “informed consent” document. This document states that they have a full knowledge and understanding of the study, and of any possible risks and benefits. Participants also have the right to drop out of any clinical trial at any time. If you have any concerns about safety, talk to someone on the clinical trial staff.

**Help is available as you consider your options talk to an oncology social worker.** Often, when people are thinking about enrolling in a clinical trial, they need someone to talk with who will help them sort through the emotional and practical concerns that come up. Oncology social workers provide emotional support, help you find ways to stick with treatment and cope with side effects, and refer you to resources. CancerCare provides free counseling from professional oncology social workers who can help you understand what enrolling in a clinical trial means for you and your family. To speak with one of CancerCare’s oncology social worker, call 800-813-HOPE (4673).



### **CancerCare® Can Help**

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercares.org](http://www.cancercares.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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